

# FLORIDA'S NEGLECTED INDUSTRY

By John Y. Detwiler, Honorary Fish Commissioner

The eastern coast of Florida, from St. Augustine to Miami, possesses attractive features to the tourist and the prospective resident second to no other State east of the Rocky Mountains. The desirability of the climate, and the natural food resources so abundantly distributed along the entire Atlantic coast from Fernandina to Cape Sable, demonstrates its adaptability to all classes of people. To the home-seeker, the fact of marine food ready for the taking without the labor of preparing and tilling the soil to raise a crop; to the tourist, a resort where health-giving and salubrious climate permits daily outdoor exercise, and which affords to those so inclined ample returns from a day's effort with rod or gun. A cruising boat or launch can transport by water, those who so desire, over four hundred miles by inside passage through the most desirable hunting and fishing grounds to be found anywhere, embracing varieties to be met with in no other section in the United States. From twenty-four to thirty-six hours by way of the most modern and elaborate methods of transportation permits an enjoyment of Florida sunshine and a balmy atmosphere during the midst of the rigors of a Northern winter, together with the home advantages of the modern hotels and boarding houses, will satisfy the most critical at an outlay adapted to the desires of all classes.

Among the most prominent and profitable industries that are engaged in south of Daytona, is that of commercial fishing. Previous to the advent of transportation facilities and the installation of ice and refrigerating plants, the waters teemed with fish at all seasons of the year almost beyond the possibilities of belief. Within the last twenty years, and since the introduction of the above mentioned advantages and the most modern appliances for taking fish, this industry has been increased to enormous proportions, especially within the last few years, and has created fortunes for many engaged in this vocation.

The principle appliances made use of on Indian river are gill nets and seines, the latter being prohibited by law, as destroying enormous quantities of young fish, but is used surreptitiously, when the waters are becoming depleted. An exception to the seine is made in shad fishing in the St. Johns river, the large mesh permitting the bottom fish to pass through. The shad fisheries of the St. Johns river embraces territory from its mouth as far south as Lake Harney, the spawning grounds of the shad. Mature shad, the results of the planting by the State Fish Commission several years ago, have been frequently taken in the Halifax river and its tributaries, Spruce creek and Tomoka.

From statistics furnished by the United States Fish Commission in 1892 for the Gulf States, the west coast of Florida produced 48,120,019 pounds of fish, valued at \$1,462,166, in which 6,416 persons were engaged; the capital invested was \$1,945,320. This does not include the enormous quantity taken

along the east coast from New Smyrna to Key West. In vessel fishing by apparatus on Gulf coast the report is that "in the seine catch Spanish mackerel occupy first place, and most of these were taken with purse seines in Hawks Channel, on the east coast, during January and February." A recapitulation of the catch of these fish in fourteen counties of the west coast of Florida shows a total of 848,656 pounds taken, valued at \$34,511.00, of which 33,315 pounds, valued at \$1,674, was credited to Monroe county. It will thus be seen that the east coast should have credit for at least one-half of the Spanish mackerel catch that has been credited to the Gulf section of the State, or 424,328 pounds, valued at \$17,250. It is admitted that for conservative reasons the full report of the entire catch is not made public.

It is certain that neither the catch nor the value of the commodity has deteriorated during the years 1903 and 1904, and as there has been no recent reports of the fish taken on the east coast of Florida by the United States Fish Commission, I am unable to give statistics other than an authentic statement of the number of barrels of fish shipped by the Southern Express Company during the years 1903 and 1904 from Florida over the Florida division and the southeastern division of said express company. The Florida division comprises the Florida East Coast Railway and the Atlantic Coast Line; the southeastern division covers the Seaboard Air Line Railway and the Carrabelle, Tallahassee & Gulf Railway. The aggregate of these shipments only will be given.

Southeastern Division: 1903, 31,814 barrels; 1904, 33,877 barrels. Net increase for year 1904, 2,063 barrels.

Florida Division: 1903, 95,268 barrels; 1904, 103,764 barrels. Increase for year 1904, 8,496 barrels.

This does not include iced fish shipped in bulk or carload lots.

The laws governing the fish industry of the State are given but little attention, as the vast area of fish-producing territory cannot be covered by the present system of wardens. The repeal of the sections of the statutes creating a State Fish Commission, its duties and emoluments, by the Legislature of 1905, is the result of years of persistent effort of those who desire to control the natural food resources of the State without contributing to its revenues, which, if controlled by suitable laws, would produce a revenue of \$75,000 annually. (The receipts for rents of oyster grounds by the State of Rhode Island for the year 1904 was \$45,222.58; estimated for 1905, \$47,373.20.) So far as known the fishing and oyster industry of Florida is exempt from all taxes or liability for depleting the waters, save possibly a personal tax on boats, nets, etc.

In some localities dynamite is used when net fishing is not profitable by reason of the depletion

of the waters, wherein shad have been planted by State effort. Dynamite is also used to take crawfish in the waters of Biscayne bay and adjacent territory. Outside of commercial fishing certain localities are noted for the abundance of fish, the waters of the lower Halifax and north Indian rivers, where the law is enforced in regard to net fishing. Sheepshead, trout, redfish or bass, and many others are taken in quantities in the vicinity of New Smyrna Inlet, and the intelligent tourist fishermen have recognized this fact to their advantage.

The future of the fishing interests of Florida depend upon the protection given by State laws. Wardens affect compromises, as they have no jurisdiction over the boundaries of an adjoining county.

In the production of oysters, Florida possesses in certain localities remarkable advantages, among which the freedom from the enemies prevalent in the North. The removal of shell from the natural beds, also undersized oysters, is one of the most serious impediments to successful production, as from the natural beds the supply of seed and spat must be procured. Of clams there are an abundance, and the introduction of the soft clam of the North, *Mya Arenaria*, where the soil is not shifting, would be profitable.

In conclusion it might be well to say that Florida is the only State possessing ample coast line (over 1,300 miles) that has neglected her natural food products creating from them a source of revenue. This neglect is rapidly resulting in a depletion of her waters to the detriment of posterity.

The present status of the Florida Fish Commission is one of empty honor—after nearly eight years of persistent effort without an appropriation. Its enemies have prevailed to the extent of repealing the laws creating it, but individual effort they cannot suppress, for it will be but a matter of time until the people of Florida will have their eyes opened to the magnitude of the revenues to be derived from the fisheries from which they are now receiving no benefit. Should it be possible that we have one more killing frost like that of 1893-4, the reduced valuation of property, together with the depletion of our forests, would require an additional revenue to sustain the expenses of the State. We will then be compelled to recognize the wealth of our waters, and create from them by license a revenue greater than from any three combined industries the State may now possess.

In the meantime, the correspondence relating to the Fish Commission and such reports as can be made to the Governor under the conditions that unfortunately exist, shall be continued as before, without compensation—simply a contribution to the people of the State of Florida by one of their number who recognizes the laws of equity to his fellow man and endeavors to secure their enforcement, whereby future generations shall enjoy that which by right is their inheritance.

## Agriculture --- Florida's Opportunity

Conducted by W. E. Pabor

"Shine on, fair SUN, till I have bought a glass  
That I may see my shadow pass."—Shakespeare.

The sun and the soil, together, make this world habitable to mankind. So we hope, through the medium of the FLORIDA SUN, to make this department, devoted to the soil and its generous response to the labor of the head and the hand of man, an interesting and profitable feature of the paper. There are shadows, as well as sunbeams, in the realm of the farm, the garden and the grove. Each have their uses and from each some lesson may be learned for mutual benefit. So may writer and reader journey on in pleasant converse with each other as the weeks roll on, the months go by, under the shining of the SUN.

W. E. PABOR.

"The glorious sun," wrote Sir David Brewster, "the center and soul of our system—the lamp that lights it—the fire that heats it; the magnet that guides and controls it; the fountain of color, which gives its azure to the sky, its verdure to the fields; its rainbow hues to the world of flowers and the purple light of love to the marble cheek of youth and beauty." In lesser degree, "as moonlight is to sunlight, as water is to wine," may the SUN of Florida shine in on the homes and into the hearts of the tillers of Florida soil.

A recent bulletin from the chemical department of the Florida Agricultural Experiment Station is devoted to Fertilizer Suggestions that will prove of great value to our farmers and fruit growers. It will be sent free to any address in Florida on application to the director, Lake City, Fla.

Experimentation along the line of creative life, both in animals and plants, begin to suggest the possibilities of generation being within human control. Among the latest is that of Professor Setchell of the botanical department of the University of California, who has been experimenting with the seaweed known as kelp, and has been able to divert the

flow of nutrition so as to make buds grow or die at his will.

A paragraph recently appeared in print stating that Professor Webber, formerly of Florida, has invented, by careful study of pineapples, several varieties which he believes will be very successful in this State. Thus far pineapple growers have not heard of them, and pin their faith, wisely, to the two varieties known to be a success in open field and shed culture—Red Spanish and Smooth Cayenne.

A carload of watermelon seed shipped to California from Florida? The statement seems incredible, but Mr. Girardeau of Jefferson County says he has sent such a carload (not of melons, mind you), of seed of a new variety to Los Angeles, Cal. How many thousand acres were required, think you?

The Punta Gorda Herald says the pineapple shipments for the season, beginning in June and ending with September, amounted to 4,334 crates. This would indicate a yield of less than 70,000 pines, as only the Smooth Cayenne are grown down there, and the average is sixteen to the crate. Two years ago the De Soto County yield is given at 10,445 crates; and, as the Punta Gorda district grows perhaps nine-tenths of the county's product, it would seem as if the industry was falling off or else the cold season of last winter caused a severe loss.

Cuban oranges—green—are now in the New York markets and coming into competition with our Florida fruit. They are shipped in barrels, and for the next three months are likely to reach the States and affect the market.

The famous groves in and about Winter Haven, in the lovely lake region of Polk County, that were established by Dr. F. W. Inman and have been under his care for many years, have been transferred to a New York syndicate. It is to be hoped that the Florence Villa groves will not be allowed to deteriorate under the new managers; their success has been

mainly due to the excellent personal care given them by Dr. Inman.

Labor is so scarce in California that the prune growers are experimenting with monkeys for fruit picking; one man in San Jose has sent to South America for 500 of them. Then he intends to have them trained to pick prunes off the trees, the dropping fruit to be gathered by boys and girls. As the monkey is an imitative animal, it is thought the experiment may prove successful. But suppose these monkeys should form a labor union, what then? Are they not closely allied to that other animal, man? And if in far-off India an ape can be (and is) employed to throw railroad switches, surely it can be taught to shake down fruit from trees.

The Arcadia News thinks it is too bad that the Everglade drainage scheme could not be sidetracked in favor of some plan to settle people upon lands already drained and ready for cultivation. To the bystander, ignorant of political wire-pulling, it would seem that for the present the need in this State is more inhabitants. When the vast tracts of fertile soil now awaiting the homeseeker are settled, then would be time to prepare more lands. Has the News, or any other paper in Polk and De Soto County, given a thought to the probable effect of the Okeechobee drainage on the lake systems of these counties?

The Commissioner of Agriculture has found it necessary to suspend the publication of the Monthly Bulletin for want of funds. The cause is accounted for by the failure of the last Legislature to provide funds for the additional printing made necessary by the enactment of the "Pure Feed Law," has necessitated placing the entire cost of this extra work on the appropriation provided only for the printing of the Department of Agriculture. The publication of the Bulletin is therefore suspended for the above reason until about January, 1906. So we save at the spigot and lose at the bung hole. But then, it is

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